



South Texas Archeological Research Services, LLC
Cultural Resource Managers & Archeological Contractors
FRIENDLY PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

May 16, 2005

Ms. Kay Hindes, Archeologist
City of San Antonio Planning Department
Historic Preservation and Design Division
1901 South Alamo Street
San Antonio, Texas 78204

Re: Letter Report of Findings for Initial Cultural Resources Survey of the Culebra Valley Ranch Subdivision
Project Area (approx 471 acres)

Dear Ms. Hindes:

On May 11 and 12, 2005, South Texas Archeological Research Services, LLC (STARS) conducted fieldwork for the above-referenced survey according to requirements of the City of San Antonio historic codes and *Archeological Survey Standards for Texas, Minimum Survey Standards* of the Texas Historical Commission (THC). The project area consisted of the footprint of the proposed new Culebra Valley Ranch residential subdivision near the intersection of FM 1560 and FM 471 (Culebra Road) in San Antonio, Texas, and included about 471 acres. It was roughly rectangular, with approximately 2,800 feet of frontage on Culebra Road, and extended about 6,900 feet northward from the road.

A segment of a major local drainage, Culebra Creek, that was basically L-shaped in plan extended north-to-south and east-to-west through about the northern half of the project area. The creek channel averaged several hundred feet in width along the segment within the project area, and major floods that occurred in recent years had scoured the floor and walls of the channel, providing good exposures for examination by the STARS field team. Other than those associated with future construction of two road bridges across the creek, no substantive ground disturbances that could substantially affect archeological resources were planned within most of the part of the project area containing the creek channel and a broad greenspace zone bordering the channel on both sides. We estimate that these set-aside areas along the creek contain about 150-175 acres.

The project area was flat to gently rolling and much of it was being actively cultivated at the time of our survey. Several large fields had just been disk plowed and surface visibility within them was about 80-90 percent. We estimate that such fields comprised about 30 percent of the project area. About another 30 percent of the area was cultivated and contained standing crops, primarily of oats and corn, that were nearly mature. Surface visibility in the latter fields was approximately 30-40 percent and access to such fields was restricted only to that necessary and sufficient to accomplish basic shovel testing on about 430-foot centers throughout the project area. Outside of the creek channel and cultivated areas, the project area was heavily vegetated with live oak, cedar elm, mountain laurel, mesquite, and huisache trees, thorn scrub brush and cactus, and a thick mat of native grasses, vines, and weeds. Surface visibility within those portions was minimal for purposes of conducting a pedestrian surface examination.

Our survey included a 100-percent pedestrian examination of the surface to the extent feasible based on surface visibility and access conditions, excavation of 85 shovel tests throughout the project area, and excavation of 11 backhoe trenches within cleared zones bordering the creek. Bank exposures along the entire creek channel were given particular attention during the pedestrian examination. A search of the THC's Texas Archeological Sites Atlas conducted just prior to the survey indicated that the project area contained no previously recorded archeological sites and had not been previously investigated.

The *Soil Survey of Bexar County* (Sheet 33) shows that surface soils within the project area are primarily of the Lewisville (LvB), Patrick (PaC), and Trinity/Frio (Tf and Tb) associations. Lewisville and Patrick soils are typically relatively underdeveloped shallow clays and clay loams that originated in place over limestone or caliche parent materials within non-riparian areas. Trinity/Frio soils consist principally of deep, dark-colored, relatively young calcareous clays, clay loams, and silty clay loams that have been deposited along drainages or bottomlands and which are frequently flooded. They are usually derivatives of the surrounding upland soils. Because they are ideal for cultivation, such soils were farmed intensively during the historic era and continue in agricultural use today almost everywhere they are present in Bexar County and surrounding areas.

The shovel tests and backhoe trenches we excavated within the project area encountered dark gray-brown (10YR2/1 to 10YR3/1) clay topsoils and lighter-colored (10YR3/3 to 10YR4/4) clay subsoils over caliche gravel or marl (10YR6/6) or over dense accumulations of Uvalde Gravels (Q-Tu) or Pecan Gap Chalk (Kpg) bedrock. Shovel tests were dispersed fairly uniformly throughout the project area, approximately on 430-foot centers. Depths ranged from about 5 to 65 cm and averaged about 55 cm. The backhoe trenches were excavated within areas bordering the creek channel that were accessible to the backhoe. With only a few exceptions, the backhoe trenches encountered caliche substrate or bedrock at approximately 50-70 cm below the surface. The exceptions, which included Backhoe Trenches 7-10 in the Hofmanns' cultivated fields south of Culebra Creek, were able to be excavated to about 2.0 to 2.5 meters deep before substrate or bedrock was encountered.

With the exception of two small, light-density surface scatters of chert chipping debris, tested cobbles, and/or burned limestone fragments, an isolated surface find of an Angostura dart point fragment, and items found mostly on the surface in association with one previously undiscovered/unrecorded burned rock midden site of prehistoric origins (T-1 on accompanying map), no prehistoric-vintage cultural materials were encountered during the survey. Small, singular manifestations of cultural materials like the lithic procurement scatters encountered at considerable distances from drainages within the project area are very typical of the portions of San Antonio that contain a broadly dispersed natural outcrop or "shield" of Uvalde Gravels both at the surface and mixed with subsurface deposits across the landscape. Investigations during formal surveys at Lackland Air Force Base and similar locales in the vicinity have revealed that this type of archeological site is very difficult to define, both geographically and conceptually, is typically very shallow, and usually has virtually no archeological research potential. Therefore we recommend no further work at these locales and that they are not recorded as sites.

Based on surface evidence, archeological site T-1 was determined to be roughly ellipsoid in shape and approximately 180 meters east-to-west along its main axis (parallel to and adjoining the northern edge of Culebra Creek channel) by about 90 meters north-to-south along its minor axis. A good exposure about 150 meters in length by about three meters wide along the ranch road adjacent to the fence revealed the presence of a heavy surface concentration of small burned limestone chunks and fragments, chert chipping debris, cores, tested cobbles, and bifacial tool fragments. The bifaces found in the vicinity of the road include two unidentified dart point fragments, one Marshall dart point fragment, and one Nolan dart point fragment. Most of the proximal fragment of a relatively large, subtriangular-shaped chert biface, which is just over a centimeter in average thickness, was found on the surface south of Backhoe Trench 11. Based on the size, shape, and thickness of the Pedernales dart point proximal fragment found within the matrix excavated from Backhoe Trench 11, we believe the biface is probably the remnant of a Pedernales dart point perform. Also, a large pit (about 75 feet long, 50 feet wide, and 12-15 feet deep) that was apparently recently used for soil borrowing had been excavated into the portion of the site nearest the creek just west of Backhoe Trench 11. Its profiles were obscured by vegetation, but several chert flakes and chips were observed on the surface around the edges of the pit.

Due to the presence of stands of nearly mature oats and corn within the majority of Site T-1, shovel testing was not performed at the site. However, Backhoe Trench 11 was excavated within the strip of land between the fence at the southern edge of the cultivated field containing the crops and the nearly vertical scour bank of Culebra Creek to the south. In plan, the backhoe trench was approximately 10 meters long by 0.5 meter in width, and was excavated to a fairly uniform depth of about 0.7 meter. The backhoe trench encountered a very dark gray-brown (10YR2/1) dense clay topsoil approximately 30 cm in thickness, over a slightly lighter-colored (10YR3/2) dense clay loam subsoil about 20 cm in average thickness, over Pecan Gap Chalk bedrock at 50 cm below the surface.

Most of the matrix excavated from the trench was too gummy, too blocky, or too indurated for screening within the time frame for the survey. However, a small proportion was screened through quarter-inch-mesh hardware cloth in an attempt to recover any chipped stone arrow points or arrow point fragments that might be present and to obtain a sample of any relatively small chert flakes, chips, or other smaller artifacts that might be present. The remainder of the topsoil was trowelled through and a grab sample of the chert artifacts discovered was collected. Among these was the only time-diagnostic artifact seen in the trench matrix, a large fragment of a Pedernales dart point. The proximal half of another dart point was also recovered from the matrix, but its type and age range were not able to be unequivocally determined.

Only a few small chunks of burned rock were seen within the matrix and no features or apparent feature remnants were observed. Two cores, two thinned biface fragments, 22 secondary flakes and/or chips, and 59 tertiary flakes and/or chips were collected from the matrix. Even considering the informal collection methods employed during backhoe trenching at Site T-1, based on our knowledge of the densities of chipped stone debitage in excavated matrix from other burned rock midden terrace sites along major drainages (like Culebra Creek) of central Texas, the concentration of such artifacts from the Backhoe Trench 11 matrix was relatively low. For example, in 1978, the STARS Principal Investigator collected approximately 3,900 pieces of debitage from a one-cubic-meter screened sample at 41BX228 (within the Walker Ranch Historic Landmark Park in north central San Antonio).

Based only on our investigations as described herein, our preliminary assessment of Site T-1 is that the entire site is probably situated in relatively shallow soils and that most if not all of the site has been severely disturbed by both natural and cultural agents, including erosion, deflation, geoturbation of clay soils, and repeated plowing and cultivation during many decades of the modern era. Therefore, from an archeological research perspective, the site probably has a relatively low potential to yield important information regarding the culture history of the project area and the surrounding region and is probably not eligible for designation as a city or state archeological landmark, or for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. However, we believe that further investigation would probably be needed to better determine the research potential and eligibility of the site. The project sponsors have agreed that the site will not be disturbed by construction as currently planned. Therefore, we recommend that no further archeological work be performed at the site unless it is to be impacted by ground disturbing activities that are subsequently planned in the vicinity, and we plan to record the site with your office, the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory, and the THC in conjunction with our survey.

Several standing structures of the historic era were present within the project area at the time of our survey. These included residential, agricultural, and commercial buildings within two complexes. One of the complexes, which was near the center of the eastern border of the project area, consisted of several tin barns, storage buildings, metal silos, and wood and wire corrals being used actively by Kenneth and Hermina Kossaeth. These buildings were associated with the Kossaeth rural residential complex, which was just to the east on the adjoining property (outside of the project area). The second complex, which was situated toward the southwest corner of the project area, consisted of two large retail furniture business buildings, a small wood-frame house and detached garage, and several fenced livestock pens. These structures were all being actively used by Hans and Charlotte Hofmann.

Page -4-
Ms. Kay Hindes
May 16, 2005

Based on style and construction materials, we believe that the Kossaeth agricultural complex buildings were constructed between about 1940 and 1960, or later. Since they are all tin-over-wood-frame buildings of generic style and construction, we believe that they have no historic preservation or historic architectural value and should be able to be demolished or moved without further review by the City of San Antonio Historic Preservation Office (COSA-HPO). Based on similar criteria (the main furniture showroom building was built approximately four years ago according to Charlotte Hofmann), with the exception of the 1900-vintage wood-frame house, the Hofmann complex buildings appear to us to have no outstanding historic preservation or historic architectural attributes and in our opinion should be able to be demolished or moved without further review by the COSA-HPO.

The wood-frame house in the Hofmann complex is a typical central Texas, rural vernacular, bungalow style, turn-of-the-century-vintage residential structure, with a large covered porch and stone column accents along the front façade. However, the stone accents appeared to us to be non-original and possibly synthetic. Even if the stone accents were not original or were replaced with synthetic materials, the remainder of the structure is very well preserved as a period home and seems to have both considerable historic preservation and historic architectural merit. Charlotte Hofmann informed us that she and Hans plan to move the house to a new location toward Castroville about 15 miles from its present setting and reoccupy it after the relocation. Although we did only a preliminary documentation and assessment of the historic preservation and/or historic architectural value of the house, we believe that this plan is an acceptable alternative to demolition and should be approved by the COSA-HPO and the city permitting office, after appropriate review.

Subject to the findings, assessments, and other recommendations otherwise described herein, we recommend to the COSA-HPO that the proposed Culebra Valley Ranch Subdivision project should be allowed to proceed as currently planned without additional cultural resource compliance requirements except where any additional cultural resources are discovered during construction, should such discoveries be made. As agreed verbally by you and project sponsor Mr. Shannon Livingston during our survey, after photo-documentation, all artifacts collected during our survey will be given directly to Mr. Livingston, which will constitute final disposition of same for purposes of compliance with the city historic codes. On behalf of ECS – Texas, LLP, we request your concurrence with these findings and recommendations.

The accompanying map (superimposed over a recent aerial photograph) shows locations of the shovel tests and backhoe trenches we excavated within the project area as well as locations of the Hofmann and Kossaeth complexes. Several photographs of the standing structures, the artifacts we collected, and of our typical excavations and environs within the project area are also enclosed, along with a key to the photos. If you have any questions, please contact me anytime.

Sincerely,

Herbert G. Uecker
Cultural Resources Director

encl: project area map
photos of test excavations, artifacts, and standing structures

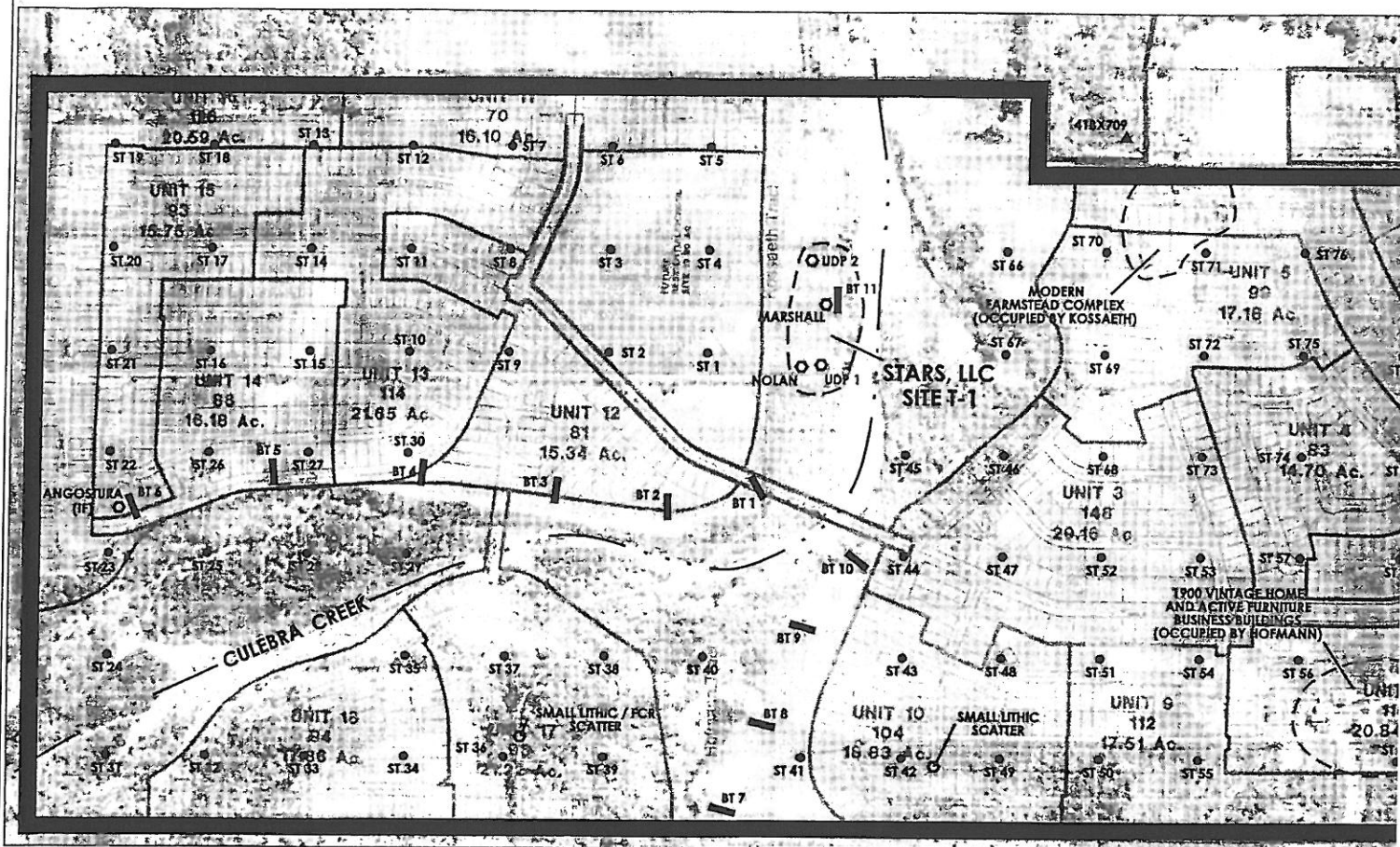
cc: Mr. Earl McIntosh, ECS – Texas, LLP

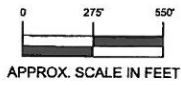
LEGEND

- ST = SHOVEL TEST
- BT = BACKHOE TRENCH
- O = ARTIFACTS



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